Unit .19

Session .05

Jesus at the Temple

Scripture

Luke 2:40-52

40 The boy grew up and became strong, filled with wisdom, and God's grace was on him. **41** Every year his parents traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. **42** When he was twelve years old, they went up according to the custom of the festival. **43** After those days were over, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. **44** Assuming he was in the traveling party, they went a day's journey. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. **45** When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. **46** After three days, they found him in the temple sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. **47** And all those who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. **48** When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." **49** "Why were you searching for me?" he asked them. "Didn't you know that it was necessary for me to be in my Father's house?" **50** But they did not understand what he said to them. **51** Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them. His mother kept all these things in her heart. **52** And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people.

Intro Options

Main Point:
Jesus shows us the importance of loving God's Word and obeying God's will.

Option 1

Your students should imagine that a middle-school age kid has just been found living and surviving alone in a nearby forest for several years. Physically, the adolescent is perfectly healthy: he or she was able to gather and grow food, etc. However, the adolescent has had minimal human contact.

They've spent months in counseling and rehabilitation and are now ready to join the "real world" as a "normal kid." The family who has adopted the adolescent goes to your church, so this student is coming to your youth group. Your group has been asked to come up with three suggestions to give to this new student to be successful at life as a middle schooler. Ask each of your students to come up with his or her three suggestions (you might want to have them write them down). Have them share their suggestions with the group. If you want, you could vote for the top three from the entire group.

Ask your group what they think of these three suggestions: 1) Be wise in God's law; 2) Prioritize God's work; 3) Try to be well-received by God and by man. Point out that these three "suggestions" are exactly what Jesus did when He was an adolescent.

Option 2

Your students should pretend they are about to become participants in a reality TV show. They will each be blindfolded and separated from their families and dropped, by themselves, into a random city somewhere in the world. Hidden cameras will follow their every move as they figure out what to do in order to survive and thrive in whatever city they find themselves.

Before they head out, though, they are permitted to bring one item with them: a plan. They should write out steps and priorities for what they will try to do or where they will try to go so that they don't instantly panic when they are dropped off and the blindfold is removed (say that in previous seasons, they found the contestants didn't do so well when they were just dropped off). Give students paper and a short time to come up with their plans. Remember, they could be dropped off in any city in the world: it could be Phoenix, AZ, or it could be Beijing, or it could be Khartoum, Sudan.

Let them share their plans. Ask how many of them suggested going to a church service or talking to a clergyperson. How many of them suggested talking theology with some religious leaders? In today's lesson, we'll see that when Jesus found Himself lost in Jerusalem, He went to the temple and engaged in conversation with His day's religious leaders. How many lost twelve-year-olds would do that?

TEACHING PLAN

Today's session is really the only account we have from Jesus' childhood after His birth and presentation. The Gospels focus their attention on Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection, and rightly so. However, God intended this portion of Jesus' childhood to be included in the Gospel of Luke for a specific reason. It highlights Jesus' humanity and divinity, and gives us an example of what we should prioritize in our own lives.

Read Luke 2:40-47.

Luke emphasizes the piety of Jesus' parents, which comes to the forefront as they demonstrated their faithfulness to God. Jesus' family annually made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, which was one of the three annual festivals celebrated by the people of God. This journey would be a 3-4 day event, with the travelers covering around twenty miles a day—not an easy journey, but a journey that exemplifies the faithfulness of Jesus' parents.

The tension of the account builds as we are told that after the feast was over, Joseph and Mary left to return home, but twelve-year-old Jesus remained in Jerusalem. Since Joseph and Mary were traveling in a caravan of families, they probably assumed that Jesus was with family, friends, or other children. They did not notice that he was missing until evening came, which was a time when everyone in the caravan would have gathered together. It was only then that Joseph and Mary realized that Jesus was missing!

Being a day's distance (about twenty or so miles from Jerusalem), Jesus' parents then journeyed back to Jerusalem in search for him. Eventually, Joseph and Mary found Jesus in the temple with Israel's teachers. Luke notes that everyone in the presence of Jesus was amazed at His wisdom and understanding as He listened to the teachers and asked questions. It is somewhat ironic to consider Jesus at this point in His life, sitting at the feet and learning from the religious teachers. But that is exactly what was happening—Jesus was not simply teaching the elders—He was listening and asking questions. He was of the age where He was expected to interact with adults in matters of the Old Testament.

- **What can we learn from Jesus, the Son of God, listening to and asking questions of the teachers in the temple?**
- **What are some ways your church cultivates a love of learning when it comes to God's Word?**
- **At this stage of Jesus' life, what do you think it meant for Jesus to say He was involved in His Father's work? How does our involvement in our Father's work grow as we mature physically and spiritually?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Jesus shows us the importance of loving God's Word and obeying God's will.

Luke 2

40. We do not know much about Jesus Christ as a child, but what we do know is sufficient to see that He was well aware of His identity and mission. As Luke tells us, as a child Jesus "grew up and became strong, filled with wisdom, and God's grace was on him." This fourfold description of Jesus is a brief but significant summation of His life as a child. Luke emphasizes Jesus' humanity, not only that He grew from an infant to a boy and from a boy to a man, but also at the same time He, as a human being, grew in His wisdom and perception of God's will. God's grace was on Jesus, which meant that He was the object of God the Father's special attention. Jesus perfectly images the Father, and if we want to know who God is, we need to carefully observe the life of Jesus.

41. The journey itself was formative to them as they remembered the Passover from the Old Testament, which commemorated God's deliverance or exodus of His people out of slavery in Egypt. As the Old Testament reminds us, the night before the exodus of God's people, the death angel visited the firstborn in the last plague of judgment over Egypt. However, when he came upon the household of an Israelite family, he observed the blood of the Passover lamb smeared around the doorway and "passed over" those homes. For Israelites, the journey to celebrate Passover was done in thankfulness and remembrance for God's grace and mercy to their people.

43-44. The custom was for families to travel in groups for safety, with the men separate from the women. Perhaps this explains why the young Jesus was "misplaced." Maybe Mary assumed He was with the men while Joseph thought He still might be traveling with the women. At twelve years of age, He could have been with either group. Maybe His parents thought He was with another one of the family members.

Mary and Joseph's group left for Galilee and traveled one day before anyone noticed Jesus was gone. Apparently, they then turned around and walked another day back to the city. They spent the third day looking all over for Jesus. Imagine their relief when they returned to the temple court and found the young boy sitting with the teachers, absorbed in listening to their teaching. When He returned as a young rabbi, Jesus would use the same area of the temple court for His own teaching (Matt. 21:14,23; 26:55; Luke 19:45).

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 40, DDG)

Jesus' Humanity

In addition to being fully divine, the Bible also affirms that Jesus is fully human. Not only does the Old Testament affirm that the Promised One (Messiah) would be a man (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Mic. 5:3), but the New Testament also affirms that Jesus' earthly life bore all the marks of being a human. He experienced the circumstances common to living as a human being, such as hunger (Matt. 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), weariness (Matt. 8:24), sorrow (John 11:35), and pain (the crucifixion).

TEACHING PLAN

Read Luke 2:48-50.

Overwhelmed from the entire episode, Joseph and Mary were both anxious from their search and relieved to find Jesus. Luke tells us that Joseph and Mary were also astounded with the rest of the crowd, but perhaps for different reasons. Mary questioned Jesus, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." Mary's question is typical of any mother. She sounded like any exasperated mother would after experiencing a missing child.

However, Jesus seemed surprised that His parents would be searching for Him. His answer indicates that He thought it would be clear where He was—in His Father's house—attending to His father's business. There was no negligence or inconsiderate behavior here. Jesus acted on His own understanding of who He was. It had been twelve years since the angelic messenger had proclaimed to Mary that Jesus was the Son of God, and this incident provoked a needed reminder to His earthly parents. Mary, despite the past revelations concerning Jesus' identity, seems to have neglected remembering just who her son really was. This would not be uncommon to those close to Jesus. Throughout His life, such a failure to truly understand would also be found in His closest disciples. In fact, it would only be in Jesus' resurrection that such misunderstandings would find their resolve.

- **How does being reminded of Jesus' identity and purpose help us strengthen our faith in Him?**

Read Luke 2:51-52.

The first time Luke focused on Mary was after the shepherds had come and gone with their news of angelic glory and a remarkable message. At that point the narrative pictured Mary alone, treasuring and pondering all that happened around and in her (Luke 2:19). That was the sort of young woman she was: thoughtful and meditative. Twelve years later, she still stored these images in her heart, as she would no doubt be doing for the rest of her life.

The last thing Luke notes in this section is that Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people. Verse 52 serves as closure to the account of young Jesus' life, a transition to adulthood. As the years passed, the wisdom Jesus exemplified in the temple scene, His understanding of the Scriptures, and His discernment of God's purpose only increased.

Jesus' kindness and compassion, as well as the moving words He spoke, drew men and women to Him throughout the brief years of His time on Earth. This is what He had in mind when He encouraged His followers to shine like lights in a darkened world. We are not to hide our lights, just as Jesus did not. Whatever the cost, we must risk gaining favor as Jesus gained favor, by engaging with the Word and the world around us.

- **Like Jesus, what character qualities should we try to cultivate in our own lives in order to grow in favor with those around us?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
Jesus shows us the importance of loving God's Word and obeying God's will.

Luke 2

48-50. In this moment, we witness Mary wrestling with how to sort out this incident. Luke is showing us that Joseph and Mary needed to be reminded of His mission from the heavenly Father. While Jesus responded to Mary's question with a question, Jesus' question also issued a bold statement: "Why didn't you know that I would be in my Father's house?" In other words, Jesus was saying, "You should have known where to find me." Jesus' life, mission, and actions revealed the special relationship He shared with God the Father, such as these passage from John's Gospel indicated (John 5:19, 8:27-29; 10:30; 14:9-11).

Activity

Imagine a popular game company is making a Christian role-playing card game in the average middle school world; part of the game will consist of "character cards." Your students have been hired to come up with ideas for these character cards. Put your students into pairs. Each pair should create a short "character card" on an index card. Each card should give the following snapshot:

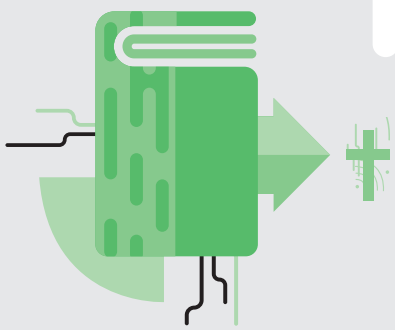
> Character's name; Gender and race; Extracurriculars: sports, music, hobbies (1 or 2); "Weaknesses": temptations to which this character is especially susceptible; Strength: something the character is good at (e.g., academics, video games, photography); Difficulty: a difficulty in this character's life (e.g., a learning disability, a strained relationship, etc.)

Once each pair has created their character card, collect the cards. Redistribute the cards randomly (each pair should now have a character card they did not create). This time, the pairs are to create a "situation card." The situation card should be a situation for the character card they just received: specifically, the situation should give the character the opportunity to do one of three things: 1) demonstrate wisdom in God's law; 2) prioritize God's work; 3) grow in favor with God and man. Students can draw on anything from the character card: situations, strengths, weaknesses, interests, etc. Give the students time to create their situation cards and then to come up with ideas for how the character can act like Christ in that situation. Let them share their situations with the rest of the group.

Debrief by asking what they saw from this exercise that they can implement in their own lives this week.

(p. 41, DDG) Christ Connection

As Jesus grew, He increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and with people. Each step of His life prepared Him to implement the eternal mission His Father had given Him: to live a life of complete obedience, die on the cross for our sins, and rise again in victory.



JESUS AT THE TEMPLE

Jesus shows us the importance of loving God's Word and obeying God's will.

JESUS CONNECTION

As Jesus grew, He increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and with people. Each step of His life prepared Him to fulfill God's plan: to live a life of complete obedience, die on the cross for our sins and rise again in victory.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

WISDOM – Knowledge and skill for doing life God's way.

HEAD

What qualities does Luke say that Jesus developed as He grew up?

What specific things did Jesus do to gain wisdom from God?

HEART

Wisdom is not something we have naturally—it must be developed. What are some ways we can pursue wisdom? How could the people we hang out with affect whether or not we develop wisdom?

Write down the qualities James uses to describe worldly wisdom and godly wisdom in James 3:13-18:

> "Who among you is wise and understanding? By his good conduct he should show that his works are done in the gentleness that comes from wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, don't boast and deny the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from above but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there is disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without pretense. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who cultivate peace."

Why is it important to know the difference between these two kinds of wisdom?

HANDS

God's wisdom comes primarily from reading the Bible, but knowing how to apply God's wisdom to the big questions we face every day can be challenging. Write down a question you have about God or how a follower of Jesus is supposed to live. Then, complete one of the options below:

1. Ask a trusted adult (a LifeWise teacher, pastor or youth leader from church) to help you answer your question
2. Use one of the online resources below to find what the Bible says about your question:
   - summit.org/resources
   - christiananswers.net
   - crossexamined.org